

REMARKS

These remarks are responsive to the Office Action, designated FINAL, mailed 17 Feb 2005.

Claims 1 and 12 are in the case, neither as yet allowed.

35 U.S.C. 103

Claims 1-26 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Felkey et al (U.S. PG Pub 2002/0161667) in view of Nicastro et al (U.S. Patent No. 2004/0015367).

Applicants have canceled claims 2-11 and 13-26 without prejudice.

With respect to claims 1 and 12, applicants have amended the claims to set forth specific characteristics of the method and system of their invention.

As amended, claims 1 and 12 distinguish the Felkey and

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Nicastro references in the specific system configuration recited, the function and content of each system component, and in particular the content, construction, and use of user and resource profiles - both references being silent with respect to such newly recited limitations of the claims.

In the following material, claims 1 and 12 are annotated with reference to the drawings, thus showing support in the specification for the newly added limitations.

1. A method for providing procurement services to a plurality of customer companies with complex accounting rules while providing secure information viewing in support of said customer companies, said customer companies being organized in a plurality of customer company groups and procurement coalitions for volume discounts and access to shared contracts with respect to a plurality of vendors, with procurement contracts leveraged across company groups, comprising the steps of:

providing a front end requisition and catalog server [40] for providing a user interface to a user at a customer company browser [46] to access catalogs and

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commodities managed by said enterprise and for providing approval notices [72] and receiving approve/reject data [71] with respect to customer approvers;

inputs to said front end requisition and catalog server [40] from an enterprise procurement services system [42] including requisition status [41], purchase order status and contracts [43], cost centers [45], currency exchange rates [47], general ledger accounts [49], purchase order history invoices [53], purchase order history receipts [55], and confirmations [56]; outputs from said requisition and catalog server [40] to said procurement services system [42] including requisitions [51] and positive confirmation responses [57];

inputs to said front end requisition and catalog server [40] from said customer company browser [46] including submit requisition; outputs from said requisition and catalog server [40] to said customer company browser [46] including approval/rejection notices [62], status display

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[63], and negative and positive confirmations; with notice and response data [65] being exchanged between said requisition and catalog server [40] and browser [46];

inputs to said front end requisition and catalog server [40] from a vendor system [48] including vendor catalogs [73] via an enterprise electronic data interchange application [44];

inputs to said front end requisition and catalog server [40] from an enterprise requisition and catalog system including postal code validation data [74];

inputs to said front end requisition and catalog server [40] including human resource extract data [70] from an enterprise hub server [52];

providing said enterprise procurement services system [42] managed by said enterprise for accepting requisitions from said front end requisition and catalog server [40] entered by said user and responsive thereto for causing said electronic data interchange

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application [44] to generate transactions to said vendors [48] and for generating accounting transactions to a leveraged procurement network data warehouse facility [50] for said requisitions;

inputs to said enterprise procurement services system [42] from said front end requisition and catalog server [40] including requisitions [51] and positive confirmation responses [57]; and outputs to said front end requisition and catalog server [40] from said enterprise procurement services system including requisition status data, purchase order status and contracts data [43], cost center data [45], currency exchange rates [47], general ledger accounts [49], purchase order history invoices [53], purchase order history receipts [55], and order confirmations [56];

inputs to said enterprise procurement services system [42] from said enterprise hub server [52] including cost center data [79]; and outputs to said hub server [52] from said enterprise procurement services system [42] including a company process control table [76], vendor master

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updates [77], and accounting detail [78];

inputs to said enterprise procurement services system [42] from said electronic data interchange application [44] including purchase order acknowledgments [88], invoices [89], payment status [92] and file transfer check reconstructions [93]; and outputs from said enterprise procurement services system [42] to said electronic data interchange application [44] including purchase orders [87], invoice rejections [90] and payments [91];

inputs to said enterprise procurement services system [42] from operator terminals including process purchase orders, requests for quotes, and contracts data [81], create/change vendor master data [82], invoice processing [83], payment proposal data [84], and payment post and print [85];

inputs to said enterprise procurement services system [42] including currency exchange rate data [80] from an external financial services server;

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and output from said enterprise procurement services system [42] to vendors [48] including paper and fax purchase order documents [86];

inputs to said enterprise electronic data interchange application [44] from said vendor [48] including purchase acknowledgments [95] and invoices [96], and outputs from said electronic data interchange application [44] to said vendor [48] including purchase orders [94] and invoice rejections [97];

inputs to said enterprise electronic data interchange application [44] including payments from a payment source [32] and outputs from said enterprise electronic data interchange application [44] including payments to customer electronic data interchange applications [30];

providing said leveraged procurement network hosted data warehouse facility [50] for storing and monitoring said electronic data interchange transactions and accounting transactions;

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providing said enterprise hub server [52] for transferring data between said front end requisition and catalog server, said back-end purchasing system, and said data warehouse facility;

inputs to said enterprise procurement services hub server [52] from said enterprise procurement services system [42] including company process control table [76], vendor master updates [77] and accounting detail [78];

outputs from said enterprise procurement services hub server [52] including human resource extract data [70], extracted from customer employee data [60], to customer requisition and catalog system [40];

outputs from said enterprise procurement services hub server [52] to a customer back-end purchasing system [54] including vendor master data [26], invoice detail [27], payment detail [28] and bank clearing detail data [29];

inputs to said enterprise procurement services hub

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server further including cost centers data [25];

said customer back-end purchasing system [54] also
receiving goods receipts [66] from customer
receiving [34];

establishing in a computer database a user profile for
associating acceptable accounting and system controls
to each person authorized by a customer company to
access said procurement services;

associating each said company with a company group of
related companies;

providing common code defining workflow components
common to all companies within said company group,
including accounting validation and approval
processing;

specifying in said user profile for each said user a
user company and company group so as to define said
controls based on company and company group by

collecting in said user profile each of a

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plurality of users into a user profile table [384] associating acceptable accounting and system controls for each person authorized by a customer company to access procurement services for leveraging access and maintaining isolation of data by identifying a user at log on as associated with a particular company group;

providing in a hub server [52] a company group human resources file [370] connected through a fire wall [372] to a requisition and catalog server [40] for creating and maintaining said user profile table [384];

said procurement services including process requirements and data resources accessible only to those users identified in their profiles as members of a particular company and, therefore, company group and including catalogs [465, 476], contracts [469], cost centers defining departments that can be charged, a chart of accounts defining general ledger account codes, entries in said user profile table [384], business rules and defaults including those affiliated with accounting and

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specifying fields that must be completed in creating a requisition and default data to be entered in those fields;

providing in each entry for a user in said user profile [384] a company group code [481], a company code [482], a plant code [483] specifying ship to location, an employee serial number [484], and an E-mail address [485];

using said company group code [481] and said company code [482] responsive to user login to associate said user with a given company [248] in a company group [242] for

responsive to user selection of a shop-from-a-catalog button on a user browser, controlling catalog application code to display to said user only those catalogs [465, 467] for which a corresponding catalog profile 466, 468 includes said user's company in said resource profile [487];

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specifying departments that can be charged across companies [248, 249] in a company group;

selectively allowing a user [451] to initiate requests for other users [452], view general ledger account codes associated with commodity codes by company group, company group specific business rules including accounting business rule defaults specifying fields required to be filled in by said user based on item being bought;

providing for each procurement resource to be shared among said users a resource profile in a computer database specifying for each resource those said companies to have access to and share said procurement resource; and

responsive to said user profile and said resource profiles, controlling user access to said procurement resources.

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12. System for providing procurement services by an enterprise to a plurality of customer companies with complex accounting rules while providing secure information viewing in support of said customer companies, said customer companies being organized in a plurality of customer company groups and procurement coalitions for volume discounts and access to shared contracts with respect to a plurality of vendors, with procurement contracts leveraged across company groups, comprising:

a front end requisition and catalog server [40] for providing a user interface to a user at a customer company browser [46] to access catalogs and commodities managed by said enterprise and for providing approval notices [72] and receiving approve/reject data [71] with respect to customer approvers;

inputs to said front end requisition and catalog server [40] from an enterprise procurement services system [42] including requisition status [41], purchase order status and contracts [43], cost centers [45], currency exchange rates [47], general ledger accounts [49], purchase order history invoices [53], purchase order history

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receipts [55], and confirmations [56]; outputs from said requisition and catalog server [40] to said procurement services system [42] including requisitions [51] and positive confirmation responses [57];

inputs to said front end requisition and catalog server [40] from said customer company browser [46] including submit requisition; outputs from said requisition and catalog server [40] to said customer company browser [46] including approval/rejection notices [62], status display [63], and negative and positive confirmations; with notice and response data [65] being exchanged between said requisition and catalog server [40] and browser [46];

inputs to said front end requisition and catalog server [40] from a vendor system [48] including vendor catalogs [73] via an enterprise electronic data interchange application [44];

inputs to said front end requisition and catalog server [40] from an enterprise requisition and

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catalog system including postal code validation data [74];

inputs to said front end requisition and catalog server [40] including human resource extract data [70] from an enterprise hub server [52];

said enterprise procurement services system [42] managed by said enterprise for accepting requisitions from said front end requisition and catalog server [40] entered by said user and responsive thereto for causing said electronic data interchange application [44] to generate transactions to said vendors [48] and for generating accounting transactions to a leveraged procurement network data warehouse facility [50] for said requisitions;

inputs to said enterprise procurement services system [42] from said front end requisition and catalog server [40] including requisitions [51] and positive confirmation responses [57]; and outputs to said front end requisition and catalog server [40] from said enterprise procurement services system including requisition status data,

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purchase order status and contracts data [43], cost center data [45], currency exchange rates [47], general ledger accounts [49], purchase order history invoices [53], purchase order history receipts [55], and order confirmations [56];

inputs to said enterprise procurement services system [42] from said enterprise hub server [52] including cost center data [79]; and outputs to said hub server [52] from said enterprise procurement services system [42] including a company process control table [76], vendor master updates [77], and accounting detail [78];

inputs to said enterprise procurement services system [42] from said electronic data interchange application [44] including purchase order acknowledgments [88], invoices [89], payment status [92] and file transfer check reconstructions [93]; and outputs from said enterprise procurement services system [42] to said electronic data interchange application [44] including purchase orders [87], invoice rejections [90] and payments [91];

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inputs to said enterprise procurement services system [42] from operator terminals including process purchase orders, requests for quotes, and contracts data [81], create/change vendor master data [82], invoice processing [83], payment proposal data [84], and payment post and print [85];

inputs to said enterprise procurement services system [42] including currency exchange rate data [80] from an external financial services server; and output from said enterprise procurement services system [42] to vendors [48] including paper and fax purchase order documents [86];

inputs to said enterprise electronic data interchange application [44] from said vendor [48] including purchase acknowledgments [95] and invoices [96], and outputs from said electronic data interchange application [44] to said vendor [48] including purchase orders [94] and invoice rejections [97];

inputs to said enterprise electronic data

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interchange application [44] including payments from a payment source [32] and outputs from said enterprise electronic data interchange application [44] including payments to customer electronic data interchange applications [30];

said leveraged procurement network hosted data warehouse facility [50] for storing and monitoring said electronic data interchange transactions and accounting transactions;

said enterprise hub server [52] for transferring data between said front end requisition and catalog server, said back-end purchasing system, and said data warehouse facility;

inputs to said enterprise procurement services hub server [52] from said enterprise procurement services system [42] including company process control table [76], vendor master updates [77] and accounting detail [78];

outputs from said enterprise procurement services hub server [52] including human resource extract

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data [70], extracted from customer employee data [60], to customer requisition and catalog system [40];

outputs from said enterprise procurement services hub server [52] to a customer back-end purchasing system [54] including vendor master data [26], invoice detail [27], payment detail [28] and bank clearing detail data [29];

inputs to said enterprise procurement services hub server further including cost centers data [25];

said customer back-end purchasing system [54] also receiving goods receipts [66] from customer receiving [34];

said requisition and catalog server [40] including a user profile table [384], a company group human resources file [374], a new employee profile build application [382], a table build application [378] and a plurality of procurement resources;

said user profile table [384] associating

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acceptable accounting and system controls for each person authorized by a customer company to access said procurement services for leveraging access and maintaining isolation of data by identifying a user at log on as associated with a particular company group;

said hub server [52] including a company group human resources file [370] connected through a fire wall [372] to said requisition and catalog server [40] for creating and maintaining said user profile table [384];

said procurement resources including process requirements and data resources accessible only to those users identified in their profiles as members of a particular company and, therefore, company group and including catalogs [465, 476], contracts [469], cost centers defining departments that can be charged, a chart of accounts defining general ledger account codes, entries in said user profile table [384], business rules and defaults including those affiliated with accounting and specifying fields that must be completed in

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creating a requisition and default data to be entered in those fields;

each entry for a user in said user profile [384] including company group code [481], company code [482], plant code [483] specifying ship to location, employee serial number [484], and E-mail address [485];

said company group code [481] and said company code [482] being operable responsive to user login to associate said user with a given company [248] in a company group [242], thereby

responsive to user selection of a shop-from-a-catalog button on a user browser controlling catalog application code to display to said user only those catalogs [465, 467] for which a corresponding catalog profile 466, 468 includes said user's company in said resource profile [487];

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specifying departments that can be charged across companies [248, 249] in a company group;

selectively allowing a user [451] to initiate requests for other users [452], view general ledger account codes associated with commodity codes by company group, company group specific business rules including accounting business rule defaults specifying fields required to be filled in by said user based on item being bought;

each said company associated with a company group of related companies;

common code defining workflow components common to all companies within said company group, including accounting validation and approval processing;

said user profile specifying for each said user a user company and company group so as to define said controls

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based on company and company group;

a resource profile for each said procurement resource, each entry in said resource profile including a resource identifier and specifying companies to have access to and share said procurement resource; and

said user profile and said resource profiles for controlling user access to said procurement resources.

Felkey is specific to telecommunications services, and outlines steps of ordering telecommunications and the approvals (signatures) required. He outlines associated hardware and software, and the ordering workflow on each of the hardware platforms.

Applicants' invention doesn't relate to approval processing or signatures, per se, but rather focuses on how code may be reused based on grouping various companies with similar traits. Grouping of companies allows Applicants to simplify the effort of providing various functions (such as accounting validation, approval processing, and other parts of workflow) so that code can be reused to satisfy company group requirements (as distinguished from individual

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companies).

In the instant case, there is in the Felkey reference no teaching of company groups, as that concept is now recited with greater particularity in the amended claims, nor of controlling access to procurement resources based on a user's company group in accordance with the newly recited claim limitations.

The Examiner appears to agree, with the following statement:

Felkey et al fail to teach an inventive concept of providing common code defining workflow components common to all companies within the company group including accounting validation and approval processing.

The Examiner continues:

...Nicastro et al teach an inventive concept of providing common code defining workflow components common to all companies within the company group including accounting validation and approval processing

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(see paragraph 0153).

Nicastro refers to "company" and "project" levels, meaning that budget codes are used which are defined either for a specific project or for use throughout the company.

However, Nicastro is silent with respect to the specific claim limitations now introduced in the claims as to how user profiles are built, and how company and company groups are used to control access to procurement resources.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicants urge that the amendment be entered and the case passed to issue with claims 1 and 12.

The Application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action by the Examiner is urged. Should differences remain, however, which do not place one/more of the remaining claims in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to phone the undersigned at the number provided below for the purpose of providing constructive assistance and suggestions in accordance with M.P.E.P.

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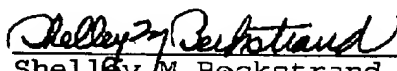
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Sections 707.02(j) and 707.03 in order that allowable claims can be presented, thereby placing the Application in condition for allowance without further proceedings being necessary.

Sincerely,

S. B. Cirulli, et al

By


Shelley M Beckstrand
Reg. No. 24,886

Date: 9 Apr 2005

Shelley M Beckstrand, P.C.
Patent Attorney
61 Glenmont Road
Woodlawn, VA 24381

Phone: 276 238-1972

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